

## Fault Lines by onpennylane

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**Summary:**

He looked down at her as tears flowed from his eyes, down those fault lines, as they seemed to run deep in his soul, settling into a pool of fear and shame. How could he do this? How could he keep her safe and happy and protected? It wasn't as if he had some shining example of a safe childhood to pull comfort and hope from. He knew pain and anger like they were his own two hands - the same two hands that now held everything that was good and beautiful wrapped snugly in downy fleece. He didn't deserve her. He didn't deserve this goodness.

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Or - Billy meets his daughter.

## Fault Lines

When he looks at the wrapped bundle in his arms, he had never felt more weak. A deep, heavy feeling set in his soul as he was confronted with his own limitations, his own short comings, his own failures. He knew in that moment that there would be a day when he would fail her and come up short - not following through on the promise he made only minutes before to protect her from anything - *anything* - that could ever hurt her. He would be too weak to keep the world, and it's many terrors and evils, at bay from ever harming her. He was a broken man.

New tears flowed, tracing the same fault lines down his face where just moments before joyful tears had carved lines into his skin - into his soul - as she was placed into his arms for the first time. Never in his life had he experienced the type of joy she brought. The anticipation of her arrival had been all-consuming in the months, weeks, and days leading up to today. *What if something goes wrong? What if the paperwork is denied? What if they change their mind about this arrangement?*

But it had happened like it was planned. And at 9:34 am in the morning, on February 18, 1997, the bundle of grey fleece was handed to him along with the wight of the world. He glad shouldered all of it because in that moment - and against most every odd - she was there, she was smiling, and she was impossibly his.

Impossibly theirs.

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As the fault lines in his soul began to rumble and crack open, two other hands moved with strength and gentleness along his rough edges. One hand supported his own trembling hand that held her. The other hand glided along the line of his spine like a calming salve. As it finally found its resting place at the small of his back, it seemed to radiate ripples of comfort and reassurance spreading out from that point to his whole body. The anxious fear that thrummed and pulsed just below his skin was soothed by the simple touch of the strong hands.

He looked up at his partner as his bloodshot blue eyes and met the warm brown ones glittering back at him. In that moment - he was anchored down to the strong hand on his back and the tiny body in his hands. They were finally together. They were finally *their* family. She would finally come home with them and meet her new extended family - the same one that had adopted the two of them and shown them what a family truly could be. Something that would catch him every time he failed her. Or him. Something he hadn't had before those big brown and chestnut hair walked into that school and burrowed deep into his heart. Something he could now give her.

The fault lines began to still in him. The pieces settling into their new locations, creating new, exposed spaces to be filled. By *her*. And *him*. And *them*.

His girl opened her eyes, and he was met with sparkling green. As the colors danced together - blue, brown, and green - she yawned a sleepy little yawn and settled back into his arms as if it was where she was meant to be. The raw vulnerability he felt was met in turn by his partner's hand and by her steady heartbeat as the two knit together and in tandem began to glide over the rough edges of his jagged canyons, filling them with belonging and purpose and possibility. And love. *So much love*.

He knew he would never be able to be everything she needed, but he could be enough. He could be a better man than his father. He could be a better husband than his father. He could be a better father than his father. He could love her fiercely every day, and he could cry with her in her own canyons, and he could whisper her the words that he never heard - that she was enough. That *he* was enough.

And that would be enough.

**Author's Note:**

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